

What's Happening to the COAST PILOT®s?

NOAA used to print a new edition of each Coast Pilot® every year. You stopped doing this. Why?

In the middle and late 1990s, the Coast Pilot Branch's budget limited our ability to print more than just a few new editions each year.

I heard you have been exploring plans to have private firms print and distribute the Coast Pilot for you.

Yes, we spent more than two years exploring all the possible ways we could set up a partnership with a private company to print and distribute the Coast Pilot and keep a portion of the profits. For a variety of reasons - many of them statutory - none of them proved feasible. So, after two years of exploration, we reluctantly concluded that a partnership was not a viable option at this time.

Sounds bleak. What, then, are NOAA's plans for the future of the Coast Pilot series?

Due to a set of unusual circumstances, another agency, the National Aeronautical Charting Office (NACO), has agreed to print and distribute our Coast Pilots at no cost to NOAA. NACO already does the same for NOAA's paper nautical charts (NACO has the authority to use the proceeds from the sale of our products to pay for the cost of printing and distribution of their products; we don't). This relieved our budget problem. We are now making some much needed improvements to our format. This year we also resumed printing a new edition of all nine Coast Pilot volumes annually.

Lately, some of us have noticed that the page and paragraph numbers of your Coast Pilot updates do not match the page and paragraph numbers in the Coast Pilot we are using. Are you aware of this?

Yes. What we found was that during our lean years, some private firms began publishing books similar to ours on an annual basis to assist the mariner. While they generally contain identical information as the Coast Pilot®, the information doesn't always have the same page and/or paragraph numbers in our NOAA Coast Pilots. Thus, the Coast Pilot updates published in the NIMA NM or CG LNMs - written by NOAA for our Coast Pilot - don't always match the page and paragraph numbers in the privately published books. If you are using one of these books, we recommend that you take advantage of the free update service offered by the book's publishers. They rewrite our revisions and reference them to the page and paragraph numbers found in their books.

This is confusing. Are you saying that companies are copying NOAA's Coast Pilot® and printing it without your permission? Isn't this illegal?

No. The United States government chooses not to copyright material produced at taxpayers expense, so it is not illegal to reprint government-generated content of a U.S. government publication (the NOAA logo and the Coast Pilot name are trademarked, and the cover photo and some content is copyrighted, however).

Do you have any plans to offer the Coast Pilot on the Internet?

Yes indeed! All nine Coast Pilots are now available on our website at <http://chartmaker.ncd.noaa.gov/nsd/coastpilot.htm>. Initially, these books are considered provisional copies because the purpose of this website is to test our production process and to solicit suggestions from Coast Pilot users on how we can improve this Internet product. Sometime this year we hope to certify the Coast Pilots on the Internet as exact copies of the printed books.

Do you have other questions about the Coast Pilot? A complaint? Heard a rumor you want checked out? Found errors you want corrected? Please email me at the address below.

Oren "Skip" Stembel
Chief, Coast Pilot Branch/NOAA
Oren.Stembel@noaa.gov

